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## **Violent authenticity: The politics of objects and images in Ishiguro**

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## **Violent authenticity: The politics of objects and images in Ishiguro**

Kazuo Ishiguro's work explores acute anxieties towards the human and material objects - from dead bodies to artworks – that circulate in a globalised world and seem to threaten its future. Tracing these objects alongside the images through which Ishiguro's characters attempt to navigate from compromised pasts into complicated futures, this article develops a new reading across Ishiguro's narratives of globalisation, migration, and mass production. Though Ishiguro's work eludes transparent political allegory, there is nevertheless an underlying consistency in the politics of objects and images found there - one that uncannily reflects, and audaciously responds to, a fetish for authenticity that destroys the future even when seeking to secure it.

The article looks across Ishiguro's oeuvre, where - from jazz records and sunglasses in *Nocturnes* (2009), to the cassette tape referenced in *Never Let Me Go*'s (2005) title – the treatment of second-hand, mass-produced and borrowed objects mirrors the abuse of humans perceived to lack authenticity, for the sake of preserving an image of 'original' – ethnic, national, or even ecological – value. Ishiguro's political significance emerges through his exposing the gaps between object and image, countering violent authenticity with private autonomy, unexpectedly achieved with help from the most banal objects.

Keywords: Kazuo Ishiguro; globalisation; migration; mass production; authenticity; contemporary British fiction.

### **1. A Child, or a Bundle? Objects and Images in Ishiguro**

In 1986, Kazuo Ishiguro wrote of a 'floating world';<sup>i</sup> today, our world is preoccupied by floating bodies<sup>ii</sup> and floating garbage patches, each anxiously read as transgressions of proper borders - both national borders, and the boundaries between

capitalist waste and the inherent value of the natural world. Beyond these anxieties lies a further, *temporal* border crisis, between past and future, where the proliferation of objects and bodies in movement is perceived to be making objects and bodies of *value* scarcer or putting them at risk, whether in an ecological economy (as accelerating consumption threatens food, water, and physical security) or a nativist one (as wealthier countries increase their hostility to migrants perceived as unproductive and undeserving consumers). Globalised capitalist production is understood, particularly on the Left, as threatening the original, ecological sources of life, whilst the Right alleges that migration (and sometimes, again, globalised production too)<sup>iii</sup> drains societies of their authentic value - turning 'somewhere' into 'anywhere'.<sup>iv</sup> Right and Left are united on the stakes: Planetary, ethnic or moral survival depends, they assert, on reducing 'mass' in production and/or migration – and securing a liveable future depends on determining the relative value of objects and bodies, and controlling their circulation accordingly.

Ishiguro's work responds to these connected crises over globalisation,<sup>v</sup> migration, and mass production of material objects. From his first novel, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), structured around an imagined migration from post-war Japan to the USA and a 'real' migration to Britain, Ishiguro has been concerned with globalisation and its relationship to mass production (as shown in such details as how washing machines signify<sup>vi</sup> both American domination in Japan and the aspiration driving the desired migration to America). Though Ishiguro's most recent novel, *The Buried Giant* (2015),<sup>vii</sup> is set in a post-Arthurian fantasy landscape, it features a migration that acts as mirror image to that in *When We Were Orphans* (2000),<sup>viii</sup> and a Britain subject to a post-imperial, post-conflict anxiety threatening to erupt into new violence.

A now well-established body of criticism explores Ishiguro's preoccupations with globalisation's conflicts throughout his work; *The Remains of The Day* (1989) has

been read as responding to Thatcherite hostility to migration in Wai-Chew Sim's *Globalisation and Dislocation in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*,<sup>ix</sup> Alexander M. Bain has explored<sup>x</sup> how the earlier twentieth-century settings of *When We Were Orphans* work through the discontents of late 1990s globalisation and interventionism; and Rebecca Walkowitz has written<sup>xi</sup> on Ishiguro negotiating his international reception and globalised publishing context throughout his career.

Despite their suggestive material, though, Ishiguro's novels tend to evade, even as they tempt, explicitly politicising interpretation. *Never Let Me Go* (2005)<sup>xii</sup> uncannily echoes elements of real late twentieth-century Britain,<sup>xiii</sup> but the novel's seemingly universalist implications (as Ishiguro himself has characterised them)<sup>xiv</sup> challenge readings of historical allegory there. Its concern with the relative value(s) of objects and bodies has, nevertheless, inevitable political resonance: Contemporary politics in Britain, where Ishiguro lives, are dominated by conflicts over support - and its refusal - for the marginalised and especially for migrants, conflicts driven by contested relationships between ethno-national identity, economic participation, and access to institutions.<sup>xv</sup> In this context, demands for authenticity 'somewhere' risk colliding with claims for autonomy and agency 'anywhere'.

In Ishiguro, these collisions repeatedly occur through gifts, exchanges and losses of material objects, the assets with which his characters exercise their often-compromised agency and attempt to build their own futures in times of anxiety over the futures of their worlds. However, Ishiguro's narratives also depict attempts to deflect or repress these collisions by adults who give a child, whose future is just coming into view, an object invested with an image presented as authentic and original. With these 'authentic' objects, the adults attempt to make the child's agency and the adults'

aspirations for the child's future one and the same thing, avoiding the former's disruptive potential.

Counterintuitively, a mass-produced object can serve this function perfectly; its lack of particularity enables its total absorption into a symbolic order that ultimately reduces to the original image, which alone has value. Examples of this in Ishiguro include how a perfect copy of an artwork lacks all value except in its repetition of an original that possesses all value, that may in fact be priceless;<sup>xvi</sup> and how mass-produced pop records rely on the fetishised image of an original singer. Here, even if this Original is absent<sup>xvii</sup> or invisible, it is everywhere visualised; and 'authenticity' occurs when the object and the image perfectly coincide.

For Ishiguro's characters, the fetishised authentic image often functions simultaneously as the image as formulated in psychoanalysis (as early image of the mother, self, or other) and the image of ethno-national or other essentialist ideology<sup>xviii</sup> (like the heroic Englishman in *Orphans*<sup>xix</sup>, the 'pure Japanese' in *Pale View*,<sup>xx</sup> or the 'Original' in *NLMG*). Simultaneously, 'objects' appear in Ishiguro as both the moveable, exchangeable object (a commodity, or former commodity) and the 'object' of desire in a psychoanalytic sense, often in the same thing. The authentic image sets the terms to possess the object and to invest it with meaning; the purpose of these terms is ultimately to control the future, formulating all object production as the image's reproduction, and making the future a reality to be revealed rather than negotiated.

As the young Christopher Banks' 'Uncle' Philip tells him, 'one day, all these conflicts will end, and it won't be because of great statesmen or churches or organisations [...] It'll be because people have changed. They'll be like you.'<sup>xxi</sup> Philip underlines his affection by presenting Christopher with a series of 'office items [...] an ashtray, an ivory pen stand, a lead weight',<sup>xxii</sup> random objects intended as signs of that

affection. Although Philip's rhetoric aggrandises the boy who supposedly fulfils a utopian image of the global future, it also denies his potential to act with autonomy or agency, or to have possessions whose meaning may not be transparent to, or function as intended by, the adult.

In Ishiguro, such a dynamic between objects and images often begins during his characters' childhoods, where adults attempt to capture the child's creativity and affect, re-directing them into the wish to reconcile the object with the pre-existing image; hence, for example, the very double-edged role of 'creativity' at Hailsham in *NLKG*. The use of objects amongst Ishiguro's child characters sometimes echoes Freud's famous 'fort-da' scenario,<sup>xxiii</sup> where the infant's use of a small object to substitute for the presence, absence, and returning presence of his parents<sup>xxiv</sup> secures an image that transforms the object's original banality.<sup>xxv</sup> Such exchanges between object and image often represent an attempt by adults to determine the child's later movements in the world.

In *An Artist of The Floating World* (1986), Ichiro has received the seemingly banal gift of some crayons from his grandfather, Masuji Ono.<sup>xxvi</sup> Ono's encouragement of the child's drawing is a vicarious way of retrieving some future for Ono himself, whose own paintings (aggressive imperialistic propaganda) are now hidden away. (Awkwardly, Ichiro is curious to see these suppressed images.) Ono's encouragement of Ichiro's creativity intersects with his attempt to preserve his grandson's exposure to authentic Japanese culture against growing Americanisation.<sup>xxvii</sup> When Ichiro uses the crayons to draw a picture of frenzied destruction (perhaps evoking the atomic bombings that concluded the war),<sup>xxviii</sup> it distresses Ono by indicating that the future cannot be controlled through guiding the child's (literal, in this case) transformation of the gifted object into an affectively-invested image. This failure is followed by Ono recalling a

traumatic experience in his own childhood (and one which determined his own future, perversely by creating a drive to thwart adult aspirations), when his own father burned his paintings.<sup>xxix</sup>

Ishiguro's protagonists repeatedly (though often accidentally) prevent object and image perfectly coinciding in a fetish of authenticity, instead tacitly exercising an evident, though opaque, autonomy. When Christopher Banks is given a magnifying glass by his English schoolfriends, it is intended as a joke, yet he does go on to a real career as a detective, which eventually leads to his journey back to Shanghai. This is intended to consolidate Banks' place as the heroic Englishman resolving international crises,<sup>xxx</sup> but it turns out instead to disrupt his imagined future of familial reunion and resolution of global conflict. The magnifying glass should have been the perfect object to stabilise Banks' future as embodiment of the British imperial ideal. Yet there is a gap between object and image; Banks' own capacity to make private images from the objects he possesses is too polymorphous and too perverse, and in fact has been since his childhood, from which the magnifying glass is left over. This gap uncannily reappears with Banks' ward, the orphaned Jennifer:

I received one day a letter from the shipping company apologising for the loss of the trunk at sea and offering compensation. When I told Jennifer of this, she first simply stared. Then she gave a light laugh and said:

'Well in that case, Miss Givens and I will just have to go on an *enormous* spending spree. [...] After all, they were just *things*. When you've lost your mother and your father, you can't care so much about *things*, can you?'<sup>xxxi</sup>

The adult Banks is disturbed by this child's lack of mourning for objects that were, he assumes, authentic traces of her lost parents. Yet surely any object cannot really substitute for absent parents, Jennifer observes (thus undermining Freud's Fort-



Da); creativity and agency thrive, she suggests, not on authenticity, but on mass production, even consumerism. As Freud argued,<sup>xxxii</sup> loss (or exchange, perhaps) allows such creativity and ‘moving on’ when the love object is recognised as one object in a world of many ‘things’, rather than as a necessary attachment to permit the subject’s agency in the world – which here amounts to demanding any worthwhile object has an authentic relation to the image.

The child’s private transformation of the mass-produced object into affective image reappears in *The Unconsoled*:

‘Number Nine’ was [...] one of Boris’ miniature players [...] The individual players [he called] simply by their shirt numbers. Perhaps because he was not aware of the significance of shirt numbers in football – or perhaps it was just another wilful quirk of his imagination – a player’s number bore no relation to where Boris placed him [...] ‘Number Nine’] was by far the most gifted of the players.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

The child is uninterested in the signifying order, but re-uses both the signifier (Number Nine) and the object (the mass-produced toy footballer) to make, and invest in, an image that refuses to be transparent for adults. Yet there are dangers when objects fall outside the visible and signifying order. These stray objects can even jeopardise borders between the living human body, with its rights, and the non-human object – as in *Orphans* when Christopher Banks returns to Shanghai:

The pavements were filled [...] babies asleep in mothers’ arms – and their belongings were all around them [...] clusters of European children [...] when once I thought we had run over a sleeping form, and glanced back in alarm, my companion merely murmured: ‘Don’t worry. Probably just some old bundle.’<sup>xxxiv</sup>

A child, or a bundle?<sup>xxxv</sup> The object (including the human body) can be dismissed or destroyed – or saved – based on whether or not it aligns with an image of essential, authentic value. Banks and his companion disregard the roadside object, and its possible humanity, in order to *keep moving* in space (they're apparently travelling from Shanghai's French Concession towards the International Settlement, crossing borders) and time – Christopher is travelling to secure his future status by recovering his childhood home and his lost parents. (It's unclear whether the house Christopher actually reaches is that home, but – in his vision, at least, though what is actually *visible* does not support it – the house fulfils the required image).<sup>xxxvi</sup>

In Lacanian terms, both migration and mass production – the processes producing 'old bundles' that might be refugees or merely floating garbage – function as the real placing a strain on the symbolic order, which turns back to the image<sup>xxxvii</sup> as a way of aggressively attempting to resolve this strain, a way of capturing (and limiting) the subject's affect and agency. Ishiguro allegorises this in *Orphans* as the desired oedipal recovery of the mother as resolution of Banks' migrations and of global crises. However, when this recovery is ambivalently achieved, it turns into a final splitting between the ideological image of ethnic and moral essentialism (Banks's self-image for most of the novel) and the maternal image he has held on to since childhood, breaking the combination of the two that has driven Banks' life. This splitting is reinforced by the use of a possibly un-original body for the final re-investment of the maternal image (i.e. the 'mother' Christopher Banks finds in the globalised Hong Kong of the late 1950s may not be the mother he lost as a child).<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The combined ideological and intimate images dominating Ishiguro's characters read, in fact, like attempts to collapse the Lacanian Symbolic and Imaginary orders into a single register; *Orphans* ends with the failure of this attempt, but not before it has

done enormous damage. This damage recurs across Ishiguro's work: What happens – his novels demand - if others must judge whether the image to which the child aligns justifies her possessing any object - even her own body? What happens – contra Freud - if the child never had an authentic original situation to repeat – is her image-making with the leftover object accepted then? Why the drive for a stable relationship between object and image when the proliferation of objects seems to deny any authenticity? In Ishiguro, the gap between object and image – the object's banality versus the image's affective and symbolic investment - is an uncannily persistent one, even whilst it attracts serious violence (as we shall see) in the attempt to close it, to recover authenticity and originality, and thereby secure the future.

The following analysis goes on to further explore these dynamics, first with two contrasting narratives – *The Remains of the Day* and Ishiguro's short story 'Crooner', from *Nocturnes* (2009) – focussed on how post-war and post-Cold War globalising capitalism allows the protagonists to exercise some compromised kinds of agency, albeit still in negotiation with surviving powerful fetishes of authenticity. In each case the protagonist finds autonomy and forward movement in time and space through the banality and bathos of objects. This is followed by analysis of Ishiguro's first novel, *A Pale View of Hills*, and his most explicit treatment of the originality fetish, *Never Let Me Go*.

In these texts, Ishiguro subtly but repeatedly evokes a potential for autonomy and agency based on privacy, not in that autonomy can be positively recognised, but insofar as it persistently arises when it is *unrecognised*, in private times and spaces where objects are invested with meaning outside the dominant symbolic and political order. This privacy is not abstract, though, but material – it requires assets, however banal or limited, and access to institutions. The banality of these requirements implies a

certain historical and moral pragmatism, which turns unexpectedly radical when set against the depth and breadth of the fetishes for authenticity and originality. Ishiguro convincingly attributes political and intimate violence to those fetishes; but he also shows persistent gaps arising between objects and images, even when this violence seeks to close them. It through these gaps, Ishiguro implies, that a future can be negotiated, rather than secured through alignment to the pre-existing image.

## 2. Authenticity versus agency

*The Remains of the Day*<sup>xxxix</sup> opens with the protagonist recalling a scene in a library; yet Mr Stevens is not there to read, but merely to dust the portraits,<sup>xl</sup> now at risk of being sold off, with Darlington Hall (complete with Stevens, its butler) itself already sold to a new American owner, Mr Farraday. Stevens' presence in the library signals his ingrained preference for elevating images of aristocratic virtue over interrogating their contents; the scene also introduces Stevens' negotiations of his own agency between the authentic and the exchangeable, between image and object.

Later, Stevens is revealed as reading books in private, but claims his purpose is solely to mimic their grammar and expression, thus 'improving' his speech, denying any 'reading' of his *own* interiority that the housekeeper, Miss Kenton, might derive from his reading choices.<sup>xli</sup> Kenton eventually physically prises Stevens' book out of his hands in her determination to read him, echoing how objects and people are brutally disposed of throughout the novel (disposals often beginning with an attempt to read an essential value, positive or negative, into them). The violent seizure of objects repeatedly signifies a broader threat in Ishiguro; *The Unconsoled* features another book being ripped from a child's hands,<sup>xlii</sup> and *The Buried Giant* begins with its protagonists being refused possession of a candle.<sup>xliii</sup>

Stevens is often misread by others; but using objects to exert some agency over those readings eventually allows him to move forward in time and space, out of his highly-compromised past. During his travels, questions of *meaning*, answered by authoritative images, repeatedly merge into matters of *possession*, addressed with (ironically but importantly, often borrowed or gifted) objects. Stevens' dusting in the library is interrupted by Farraday unorthodoxly offering him use of his own automobile, for Stevens to take a holiday touring the West Country. Farraday's offer prompts Stevens' anxieties regarding what he should wear, answered by recalling several good-quality suits passed on to him by Darlington guests; producing the right image is essential for Stevens' confidence in moving through a disrupted post-war world, and this image depends on second-hand objects.

Stevens realises that the journey might allow him to visit Kenton, reviving a relationship ruined by his unwillingness to pursue a life outside service to Lord Darlington; though his borrowed car and clothes ironically reinforce that earlier aristocratic identification, they do give him confidence to travel beyond its suffocating effects on his life. This confidence does not come easily to Stevens, hence his insistence on the Englishness of everything he sees: he avoids any potentially disruptive unfamiliarity in places he visits by reading them as expressions of an essence he has always known. This impulse reappears in *NLMG*, when Kathy H notes how 'my idea of the various counties is still set by these pictures Miss Emily put up [...] I'd be driving through Derbyshire, say, and catch myself looking for a particular village-green [...] and realise it's the image Miss Emily showed us the first time I ever heard of Derbyshire'.<sup>xliv</sup> Both Stevens and Kathy recall or re-use objects (Kathy's calendar pictures, Stevens' guidebook) that provide secure images – with limits.<sup>xlv</sup>

Stevens sees ‘dignity’ as a quality underlying any image of Englishness, including his own image; but, awkwardly, ‘dignity’ is also the entitlement that the xenophobic socialist Harry Smith claims for the general population by right of their sacrifice in war,<sup>xlvi</sup> a sacrifice necessitated by political and moral failings in which Stevens was complicit. Breaching the limits Stevens applies to the image of ‘dignity’, of England, Smith unintentionally disrupts this image’s secure relation to objects and bodies; and Stevens’ travels threaten to become not merely a series of ‘views’ of England, but encounters with a different, less securely determined world.

It is not only Stevens that struggles with this post-war world, nor is this struggle confined to paranoid traditionalists like him. The potential violence in making objects - encompassing human bodies, material places and manufactured goods - align to images, and disregarding them where they do not fit, emerges when Harry Smith condemns a former local resident, Mr Lindsay, who had material accessories of ‘gentleman’ status (‘a fine house and good suits’)<sup>xlvii</sup> but nevertheless -

‘You can tell a true gentleman from a false one that’s just dressed in finery. Take yourself, sir. It’s not just the cut of your clothes [...] There’s something else that marks you out as a gentleman. Hard to put your finger on it, but it’s plain for all to see.’<sup>xlviii</sup>

Smith extends hospitality only because he reads an image into Stevens, one visualised and yet invisible; objects might display this image, but do not create it, and inauthentic displays must be disregarded. The catastrophic irony is, of course, that Stevens is *not* a true gentleman – he is being misread (in an ironic mirror of another occasion when Stevens, dissociating himself from Lord Darlington, accidentally gives Farraday’s guests the impression he is not even an authentic English butler, undermining his own commodity value).<sup>xlix</sup> Harry Smith apparently decided that

Stevens was a gentleman before meeting him, on the report of someone who found Stevens' (actually, Farraday's) car, which puts 'the car Mr Lindsay used to drive in the shade'.<sup>1</sup> An object is assumed to reflect an image of essential identity 'plain for all to see', but is in fact merely borrowed, inauthentic. This extends the potential threat in the hostility towards the 'false' (and ominously absent) non-gentleman, Lindsay, whilst Smith's words on the nature of gentlemen unexpectedly echo the hidden 'nature of Jewry' cited in the earlier dismissal<sup>li</sup> of two Jewish servants from Darlington Hall. When rights depend on an imagined reality that may or may not correspond to appearances, both objects and bodies are in jeopardy, as is the right to their possession and investment with meaning.

Perhaps because of this encounter with violent demands for the alignment of objects and images (in the name, ironically, of a social-democratic future), Stevens tentatively begins to use objects to craft his own future. Despite Smith's unintended but disturbing threat, Stevens finds some confidence via his use of the second-hand, borrowed and bought, a confidence to move forwards if conditions allow; *Remains* is haunted by the possibility that they might not, and that hostility to the inauthentic might extend to refusing recognition of human status, a refusal in which Stevens was once complicit.<sup>lii</sup> Stevens' travelling – which ends with bathos, but also with a degree of consolation and confidence, however limited<sup>liii</sup> – has depended on learning to manipulate how his image is read by others, which he achieves via second-hand objects. Though the image Stevens projects remains historically evasive, in doing so he at least exercises the private agency that he has repressed in his life to date – in his adoration, simultaneously self-effacing and self-absorbed, for the image of Darlington, Lord and Hall, and the greater image of Englishness it localises.

The first short story in *Nocturnes*<sup>liv</sup> (2009) returns to several of the same themes that *Remains* located in the post-war period, but now within a post-Cold War, extensively globalised, Europe. Once again, the protagonist is both threatened by demands for authenticity and complicit in them, but manages to nevertheless exercise some agency in negotiating his own future.

In 'Crooner', a young musician working in Venice's café orchestras encounters a childhood hero – Tony Gardner, an ageing jazz singer, visiting Venice with his wife. Janeck enthusiastically recounts how Gardner's records consoled his late mother during his childhood in an unnamed eastern-bloc country, leading Gardner to unexpectedly enlist him: together, they will surprise Mrs Gardner with a serenade to mark the couple's separation, because 'the guys who came back successfully [...] Every single one of them, they've remarried'. Shocked, Janeck argues:

'I still don't get it [...] This place you and Mrs Gardner come from can't be so different [...] these songs you've been singing all these years, they make sense for people everywhere. Even where I used to live.'<sup>lv</sup>

Janeck challenges Gardner by asserting the relation between a unique image and mass-produced objects, between Gardner's records and Gardner's on-record persona, which Janeck invests with both his mother's memory and his own exercising of the agency the Cold War denied her: a persona apparently incompatible with the real Gardner's planned separation from his wife. Janeck's migration is enabled by political circumstances - the Cold War's end and European Union expansion – but his confidence is sustained by his ability to project his own images for tourist consumption and by his internalised, psychic image of his mother, which both – despite the apparent gulf between them - depend on banal material objects: Gardner's records, for the



mother's image; and, for the image Janeck sells to tourists, tools to appear Italian: 'suit, sunglasses, keep the hair combed back, no one will know the difference'.<sup>lvi</sup> This Venice's clientele desire 'authentic' images but needs exchangeable objects and migrant bodies to reproduce them.

'Crooner' also narrates a Venetian encounter between a young man and an ageing celebrated artist, ironically reworking Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*.<sup>lvii</sup> Mann has been identified as an influence on Ishiguro,<sup>lviii</sup> and (given its fame and date, and Ishiguro's interests) Ishiguro probably knows Visconti's 1971 film version of *Death in Venice*,<sup>lix</sup> where, as in 'Crooner', music is the key motif.<sup>lx</sup> <sup>lxi</sup> 'Crooner's echoes of *Death in Venice* appear, however, primarily as parody: Whereas Mann's (and Visconti's) Aschenbach is suspended in an obsessive gaze upon the younger man, never speaking to him, in 'Crooner' the youth makes the approach, almost immediately. For Aschenbach, Venice's selling of itself for tourists' consumption is swollen with foreboding symbolism; Ishiguro's gondoliers and musicians are ordinary people, and his narrator is not the consumer but the seller – the young man himself, source of naïve fandom rather than sublime truth.

Mann's commercial objects are abject reminders of the mortality of bodies, opposed only by the pure image of Tadzio,<sup>lxii</sup> through which the dying Aschenbach perhaps escapes a material world where both objects and bodies have become diseased through mass production.<sup>lxiii</sup> Commercial objects, sick bodies, and sexual bodies are abject in Kristeva's sense for Aschenbach;<sup>lxiv</sup> they jeopardise his separation from their own gross proliferation, and lack an authentic connection to a valued image. Aschenbach himself, though, transforms his body into a perfect image, destabilising the boundaries of human body and non-human object by using the cosmetics he finds abject in others,<sup>lxv</sup> to secure Tadzio's image and hold his gaze.

Ishiguro's bathos contrasts, perhaps deliberately, with Mann's pathos. Yet, though Gardner may seem cynical against Aschenbach's obsession, the self-image he is chasing is not necessarily any more rational, and nor is Janeck's image of Gardner. Gardner and Janeck are nevertheless creative in gaining confidence for movement by producing new images, which depend on quite banal objects – a gondola to hire, sunglasses and hair gel to wear, records to sell - echoing Stevens' use of inauthentic objects in *Remains*. The ultimate inauthentic object here is Venice itself, its romantic aura sustained by consumerism and migrant labour.<sup>lxvi</sup>

'Crooner's' slippages between images pragmatically produced for commercial gain and images invested with great affective and intimate power suggest that life in this Venice, and the exercises of agency found there, depend on a radical privacy, a refusal to visibly align to presumptions about which objects are valuable, and which are trash, queering any turn to the authentic or sublime original in reaction to globalised capitalism and consumerism. They also depend on a history that remains contingent.

In a throwaway line, Janeck refers to seeing Henry Kissinger sitting in the square,<sup>lxvii</sup> the cameo recalling how this Venice is a political creation of the Cold War's end and the European Union's expansion, of markets and migration that have extended the gap between object and image in which Janeck's agency operates. This gap is nevertheless not securely accepted; Janeck has not merely to perform as an Italian, but *pretend* to be one; and the racist gondolier of his acquaintance<sup>lxviii</sup> emphasises that migrant labour is often unwelcome. Authenticity is a political agenda, a potentially violent one, as well as a valuable commodity. Janeck's own refusal to accept the difference between his image of Gardner and the Gardner he actually meets suggests that the ethno-national authenticity he must cynically accommodate has an ironic, counter-intuitive parallel in his own belief in artistic authenticity. Like *Remains*,

‘Crooner’ uncannily links chauvinistic demands for authenticity from a spectrum of modern sources, via their common demand for alignment between the object and the image.

### 3. From Violent Histories to Future Aspirations

*Remains* and ‘Crooner’ find histories of violence on the narrative margins, haunting the characters’ forward movement through time and space; Ishiguro’s other works often make those histories more explicit, their continuing hold on the future more obviously dangerous. If *Remains* and ‘Crooner’ are examples of where characters are able, albeit ambivalently, to negotiate around an authenticity fetish, in other work from across his career, Ishiguro emphasises that fetish’s reach and danger.

*A Pale View of Hills* opens in a 1980s Home Counties village, where the elderly Etsuko reflects on the death of one of her daughters, Keiko, and the current lifestyle of another, Niki, before she begins to recall life in Nagasaki soon after the war, and her friendship then with a young mother, Sachiko, and her daughter, Mariko. The novel hinges on a hinted, never clarified, twist: in a ‘small but explosively significant slippage’ concluding the Nagasaki narrative,<sup>lxi</sup> Etsuko speaks as though *she* is Mariko’s mother;<sup>lxx</sup> a sudden uncanny elision suggesting that Sachiko may have been wholly or partly Etsuko’s projection.

In the 1980s, Etsuko finds Keiko posthumously returning as a peculiarly reassuring image:

I have found myself continually bringing to mind that picture – of my daughter hanging in her room for days on end. The horror of that image has never diminished, but it has long ceased to be a morbid matter; as with a wound on one’s own body, it is possible to develop an intimacy with the most disturbing of things.<sup>lxxi</sup>

The object that would otherwise be wholly abject (the wound, the dead body) becomes an ‘intimate’ image, continually recalled, that implicitly reasserts Keiko’s essential Japanese-ness, for ‘our race has an instinct for suicide’.<sup>lxxii</sup> Kristeva describes abjection emerging when ‘death [...] interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death’;<sup>lxxiii</sup> in *Pale View*, this occurs when material objects and mortal bodies interfere with apparently secure images like the ‘picture’ of the dead Keiko, supposedly confirming a racial essence unmoved by globalisation and migration.

‘There’s a young woman I see every week,’ Mrs Fujiwara went on. [...]

‘Every time I go to visit the cemetery [...] a shame, a pregnant girl and her husband spending their Sundays thinking about the dead [...] They should be thinking about the future. [...] That’s no way to bring a child into the world.’<sup>lxxiv</sup>

This child is awkwardly between image and object, simultaneously imagined ‘future’, repressed past, and ambiguous but real material body growing inside the mother. The adults’ obsessive focus on children as awkward bodies and worryingly hidden minds queers the relationships between the images internalised and imagined by children and the images ordering adult political and social life. Throughout, children figure a future ironically feared to jeopardise the adult’s own future, producing two reactions, both seeking to secure the future: Disciplining the child to enforce her submission to an image with secure meaning; or the child’s violent destruction. These two possibilities merge when the dead child’s body itself becomes a consoling image.

As Sachiko prepares to migrate to the USA with her American boyfriend, she announces that her daughter’s beloved kittens must be left behind:

‘Give me that creature, Mariko,’ Sachiko said. ‘[...] It’s just an animal.

Why can’t you understand that, Mariko? Are you really too young? It’s not your little baby, it’s just an animal, just like a rat or a snake.’<sup>lxxv</sup>

Sachiko dismisses her daughter's affective image of the kittens, insisting they are merely abject trash. Her refusal of value to the animals unconsciously extends to the child too, as betrayed in 'not your little baby'; when Sachiko subsequently holds the kittens down to drown, it closely echoes the mother seen drowning her child earlier.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Sachiko's insistence on drowning the cats before they travel suggests, therefore, the repressed and violent anxiety behind her aspirations for – and through – her child:

'[Mariko will] have far more opportunities there [...] She could become a business girl, a film actress even. America's like that, Etsuko, so many things are possible. Frank says I could become a business woman too.'<sup>lxxvii</sup>

The planned migration is underpinned by supposed confidence in the child as embodied potential. Sachiko's rhetorical slippages between aspirations for the child and for herself suggest the possibility of violence towards the child; if her body does not fulfil the required image, it too could be destroyed, like the kittens. Responding to Sachiko, Etsuko asserts her happiness to remain in Japan; but the reader knows *she* has later migrated and had daughters who grew up in England; and whether Sachiko was wholly or only partly her own projection, Etsuko's 1980s England is an ironic, banal contrast to Sachiko's aspirations for America. Hence the return of the repressed in Etsuko's recollections: The implied belief that stray objects in the world, including her own daughters, will (or should) always finally conform to an image of their real 'home', or else die; Keiko has done both.

When Sachiko prepares for her migration by drowning the kittens, there is an ambivalence between the daughter being killed (in reality or fantasy) whilst figuring the continuing hold of the catastrophic recent Japanese past, and the child as imagined future, the planned journey's necessary *object* in a multiple sense. The underlying consistency, though, as suggested by the violence transferred on to the animals, lies in

the need to forcibly align the object or body to the image; lacking this, the child would not merely oscillate uncannily between embodying the past and figuring the future; she could slip off sideways,<sup>lxxviii</sup> as Niki does later with her anti-careerist lifestyle that refuses, despite her mother's pressure, to lead to steady movement forwards in time or security in place. Nevertheless, *Pale View* concludes with Etsuko's relationship with Niki starting to open up, if uncertainly, with a slight shift forward, following a narrative stuck in overlapping regressions and repressions, registering through the unexpected use of an object:

‘You know that friend I was telling you about, the one writing the poem about you? [...] She wanted me to bring back a photo or something. Of Nagasaki. Have you got anything like that? An old postcard or something?’

‘I should think I could find something for you. How absurd [...] whatever can she be writing about me?’<sup>lxxix</sup>

Despite Etsuko's (justified) doubts, she does provide an object: The remains of an illustrated calendar, showing the image (a view of Nagasaki's harbour) for a single month. (Calendars, as noted, are also revenant objects in *NLMG*.) An object that should have embodied the forward movement of time – and been discarded when obsolete – has been retained as stuck image of the past; yet in supplying the calendar for someone else to write about her – and thereby, ironically, undermining this object's authenticity even when the latter is being fetishised – Etsuko pragmatically allows a form of temporal (and, by association, spatial) movement. In a reversal of the earlier violence towards the child, this calendar is an image being transformed back into an object, to be exchanged for another person's creativity, however inauthentic the results.

#### 4. Objects, Images, and Originality

*Never Let Me Go* combines the alternately subtle and shocking depictions of violence against the child with which Ishiguro began his novelistic career in *Pale View* with his recurring concerns with mass production and migration. The children in *NLMG* grow up in a paradoxical situation and a complicit, yet protective, institution, where they are inculcated with creativity and ambition, treated as embodying a future even though their future will end with being *disembodied*, deconstructed into objects for exchange, their organs harvested. This irony is reflected, again, in travels they undertake, invested with affective and vocational purpose, but here always ultimately circular.

Hailsham's children are objectified bodies that must be aligned to an image even when this is necessarily contradictory: They are raised to fulfil the image of a human with agency and rights, so that their 'Guardians' can protect a strictly limited allowance for such rights even in the context of the clones' ultimate purpose. Their education gives them a sense of agency over their future outside the institution's protected space, whilst the (initially mysterious) requirement to produce and submit works of art registers, along with Hailsham's 'sales' and 'exchanges', an order of material production, consumption, and human reproduction (though the clones themselves cannot reproduce), one manifesting in both jealous possession of, and trade in, re-used objects, which the children hoard in their personal 'collections'.<sup>lxxx</sup>

They too are themselves second-hand objects, on their way to being re-used, whereas to be recognised as fully human requires being an 'Original', part of the non-cloned human population. The clones long to encounter their own particular Original; Kathy later searches for her Original's image in porn magazines; her friend Ruth searches through office windows. (The expectation of finding an authentic and affective

image in unlikely places both echoes and revises *The Unconsoled*, where<sup>lxxxix</sup> the protagonist, Ryder, frequently recognises objects as things known from his childhood, though by any logic they cannot be such.) Failing their own search, the clones' best hope is to approximate the image of Originality in *general*, an aim Hailsham encourages.

Does the object's closeness to the image it reproduces – just as the clones closely reproduce their Originals' appearances – mean that the object/body should approximate the rights of its Original; or does it rather mean that this object is utterly disposable, as the mass reproduction of a priceless artwork is itself valueless? *NLMG*'s society, it eventually transpires, is moving from partly indulging the former view to asserting the latter. The living body is itself fetishised as an image of Originality here; it has to be conceived (unrealistically) as wholly separated from, and unlike, other objects. The clones awkwardly betray the falsity of this separation, and thus become abject to the Originals who gaze upon them. *NLMG* suggests that the body as fetishised image, imagined as separated from all other objects, can cause violence to bodies *as* objects and to objects as essential ancillaries of any living human.

In this environment, *possession* of disposable materials becomes a deeply-desired sign of approximation to Originality. During Hailsham's 'Exchanges', Tommy is bullied for lacking anything to exchange<sup>lxxxii</sup> and for inability to produce artwork (and implicitly as sexually undesirable, as unsuitable for the symbolic exchange economy of human reproduction as for object production). Yet Tommy is more aligned to, perhaps more cognisant of, the real situation than his peers; they will all be finally excluded from the (re)productive economy with which Hailsham pretends they can engage as subject rather than only as (in a dual sense) object.



One scene raises the impossible question of what happens if an object, or clone, privately creates a new image, one that does not match the image they were themselves expected to reproduce. Here the clone – whilst still a child - moves from approximating Originality in the abstract to uncannily creating a particular ‘original’ image by reusing an object, itself intended as a merely disposable reproduction.

Alone in a room at Hailsham, Kathy plays, on a cassette tape, a song called ‘Never Let Me Go’. As she recalls later, she innocently misinterprets the lyrics as referring to a woman who has given birth when it seemed impossible, rather than one wanting to keep her lover, and privately acts out the scene she imagines, holding a cushion in place of a baby, only to realise that she is being watched:

[Madame] was out in the corridor, standing very still [...] that same look in her eyes she always had when she looked at us, like she was seeing something that gave her the creeps. Except this time there was something else, something extra in that look I couldn’t fathom.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

Kathy disrupts the governing ideology – even, or especially, its liberal incarnation, which Madame practises – by re-using an object (obtained in a ‘sale’),<sup>lxxxiv</sup> in private, to make a new image. Her innocently uncanny transgression is mirrored in the poignantly innocent switch between ‘baby’ as lover and as infant (echoing her alternating quasi-maternal and sexual relations with Tommy). Kathy’s private performance exposes her new image’s reliance on the object being inauthentic, re-used and misread, characterised by a *gap* between it and the image it was ‘originally’ intended to reproduce. Genuine originality has arisen in a private room hidden from the gaze of ‘Originals’ like Madame; hence, perhaps, the ‘something extra in that look I couldn’t fathom’ – as the psycho-political image of Originality collides with visible reality.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

Kathy's accidentally-exposed private image-making disrupts the notion of Originality as a coherent, secure, and therefore *limited* value; this threatens to challenge the distribution of material objects and the right to their possession. The scene resonates with how recent theorists of the dominance of transparency and authenticity in contemporary politics, such as Josh Cohen,<sup>lxxxvi</sup> and Thomas Docherty,<sup>lxxxvii</sup> view privacy as common enemy of both, in arguments they frame through Hannah Arendt. Arendt's *The Human Condition*<sup>lxxxviii</sup> argues that the private sphere, before becoming the elevated realm of modern intimacy, is first merely any place where banal needs (and banal objects) are handled; its protection is nevertheless essential for exercising agency in the public world (an argument *Remains'* Mr Stevens, for one, might recognise).<sup>lxxxix</sup> Modernity, Arendt argued, refuses this protection, instead subjecting both private and public realms to management based on recognising an essential human nature; politics becomes, rather than a plural negotiation, merely a programme to realise this image.

The four walls of one's private property offer the only reliable hiding place from the common public world [...] A life spent entirely in public [...] retains its visibility [but] loses the quality of rising into sight from some darker ground which must remain hidden if it is not to lose its depth in a very real, non-subjective sense.<sup>xc</sup>

For Arendt, who formulates her point in a noticeably visual metaphor, the 'darker ground' is constituted simply by material conditions, like the limited but real private time and space granted to students at Hailsham (or in Stevens' pantry). Yet this privacy is incompatible with a politics based on making one's alignment to a value, considered both essential and scarce, permanently visible. The clones can still be given (trash) objects, but when, as with Kathy's tape, these objects display a newly and *privately*-made image, this must be dismissed from sight – *pace* Arendt, visibility is the

governing principle, privacy the enemy. Or, as Paul Virilio put it, the ‘totalitarian ambition’ for ‘omnivoyance [appears] as the formation of a whole image by repressing the invisible’.<sup>xci</sup>

*NLMG*’s uncanny totalitarian society accordingly attempts to eliminate any remaining privacy from which disruptive creativity might arise, as it arises at Hailsham (closed down by the novel’s end), because such creativity threatens the reconciliation of objects back to a single image that the ‘Originals’ use to try to secure their future (in a very real, practical sense). In the real history haunting *NLMG*, a crucial tactic for eliminating disruptive creativity was precisely the enforced *repetition* of a single image, as Virilio argued;<sup>xcii</sup> in the visual culture of Fascist politics (with their hostility towards Modernist experimentation with giving high-art status to trash objects), this endless multiplication of the image exceeded its basis in any particular object, which became imagined merely as reproduction of a single original, itself a visible code for an invisible (racial) essence. Though the *state* seems eerily absent in *NLMG*, Originality is similarly embedded, invisible but permanently envisioned, throughout its society.

Whilst under this regime agency is ultimately granted exclusively to the Originals, this agency is increasingly meaningless, lacking a future, even whilst futurity is perpetually secured and preserved<sup>xciii</sup> through an image removed from the interplay of objects and bodies in their banality, fragility and capacity to love. This reacts to perceived *scarcity*: Originality coincides with the right to comprehensive healthcare, the materially scarce commodity underlying the imagined scarcity of Originality itself; as Miss Emily says, ‘however uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children [...] did not die from cancer, from motor neurone disease’.<sup>xciv</sup> This scarcity is emphasised by the abundance of *unoriginal* trash objects and, paradoxically, by the neo-romantic fetishisation of art.<sup>xcv</sup> It is the

same idea of scarcity in value (and scarcity *as* value) that underpins (or rationalises) hostility to migration in the real contemporary Britain, as observed earlier.

In adulthood, now realising that their childhood artwork was collected with the aim of demonstrating their human (quasi-Original) value, Kathy and Tommy hear a rumour that clone couples in true love might be eligible for a ‘dispensation’ from making donations (a notion itself reiterating the relationship between scarcity and value). They pursue this apparent possibility, and find the now-elderly Madame living with Hailsham’s former head, Miss Emily, and present the two women with some drawings by Tommy, hoping these will demonstrate their approximation to Originality and thus justify a dispensation (a quasi-marriage: the public recognition of a private relationship). They are unsuccessful; Madame reveals that whilst she did use the children’s artwork to advocate for the clones’ humane treatment, this campaign eventually failed, and ‘dispensations’ are fantasy. Providing genuinely original images is no longer compatible with the image of Originality (tellingly, many Hailsham pictures have now been lost).

What is the image of Originality, if by the novel’s end it can no longer be recognised in a drawn or painted image, an art *object*, however original the latter is? The image of Originality appears as the uninterrupted gaze; yet its ‘omnivoyance’ paradoxically relies on strategic refusal to see, to recognise. Whereas Madame was previously caught out, and this dynamic disorientated, in coming upon the young Kathy in private, now both she and Miss Emily succeed in refusing to recognise the people and pictures before them (a refusal ultimately arising from the attempt to retain and secure the Imaginary within the Symbolic order, and thus secure the future by eradicating the disruptive potential of the very creativity, the ‘image-making’, Hailsham once sought to nurture). Ironically, for us this refusal makes Miss Emily and Madame uncanny,

simultaneously human and inhuman, as they once saw the clones - before they gave up on seeing, or saving, them at all.

Recognising Kathy and Tommy's particular, shared 'originality' – their relationship – would risk the passage of time becoming more than the passing of time, temporal and spatial journeys becoming other than essentially circular: They might become *migrations*, contra a society that has secured its 'Original' (one could say, 'native') population and serves them at any cost.<sup>xvii</sup> It would also mean acknowledging that 'unoriginal' objects – like the clones, and their 'collections' – possess potential to produce new images; arising as it does from the initial *gap* between the object and the image, this creative potential is antagonistic towards Originality.

NLMG's society therefore denies the existence of this gap, for the sake of its fantasised security based on scarcity and authenticity. To let this security go would, as Miss Emily and Madame acknowledge, not only extend the possibilities of a private life, but also risk a re-distribution of material objects, beginning with the clones' agency over their own bodies. Following Arendt, we can characterise this as the potential for 'real' politics, for negotiation of the future rather than reproduction of supposedly original and authentic value. In the recent real history uncannily mirrored here, the proliferating objects and bodies of mass production and migration, anxiously perceived by 'original' citizens as uncanny or abject, simultaneously prompt and trouble such fetishisation of authenticity; they too trouble it with the potential for real politics and an apparently less secure future.

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The demand to demonstrate alignment to a pre-existing image bearing essential value, in order to access material goods, exercise agency, and move freely, occurs frequently today – notably in calls for visible demonstration of

British/American/European ‘values’ by refugees and migrants, and in distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor (categories sometimes intersecting with migration status). Yet as Kathy and Tommy’s case suggests, the demand to embody an image as the prerequisite for exercising agency (or just for preservation of life) frequently cannot be fulfilled even when an earnest attempt is made to do so, because this image is hostile to the bathos and uncertainty – the privacy, in Arendt’s sense – of lived experience. Moreover, societies making such demands require not only ideological coherence but material sustenance, and both – as in *NLMG* – depend on those objects and bodies deemed inauthentic. As ‘western’ societies, including the United Kingdom,<sup>xvii</sup> accelerate their demands for native authenticity in reaction to globalisation, Ishiguro’s uncanny versions of such demands read as increasingly prescient.

The persistent gap between objects and images, the tendency of material things and bodies to become *other* than valueless reproductions of a priceless original, consistently structures Ishiguro’s work. His characters, however, repeatedly (and often violently) attempt to close this gap between object and image, viewing any object of real value as scarce and mass production and migration, in challenging visible authenticity, as debased abundance. Ishiguro shows these attempts recurring across late modern history, on the Left as on the Right: they have an advocate in the socialist Harry Smith, and the migrant worker Janeck himself fetishises authenticity, even whilst facing hostility for his own lack of it.

In *NLMG*, the use of trash objects to signify the clones’ trash status suggests how anxiety over the ecological costs of mass production could risk a chauvinistic fetishisation of deservingness and authenticity, mirroring how the novel’s comprehensive but morally blind post-war welfare state responds to disease. Ishiguro

suggests that an obsession with something very like *NLMG*'s Originality runs broad and deep in contemporary politics and culture, as 'values' of presumed scarcity and lost authenticity drive distinctions based on deservingness. Audaciously, Ishiguro implies that these distinctions finally tend towards the category distinction between human and non-human; this distinction's deadly history in European colonialism, Nazi Germany, and Imperial Japan constitutes the repressed past perpetually returning, transferred but not entirely transformed, in Ishiguro's narratives.

The will for security over the future, in a world where objects and bodies are apparently proliferating out of control, reaches its fullest destructive form in the image of Originality – both the category of the human, and a restrictive qualification of it – that governs *NLMG*. However, this is not the only form of security there – nor the only form by which characters attempt to secure their futures. The Hailsham children's institutional upbringing gives them limited but real access to private times, spaces, and property – which gives them limited, but real, agency. Miss Emily indicates<sup>xcviii</sup> that when Hailsham closed down, so too did such possibilities, and the material possessions on which they were based.

The banality of these possessions (as Jennifer says in *Orphans*, they are just things), combined with the violent destruction they ultimately face, underpins Ishiguro's critical counter-narratives to the contemporary turn to authenticity. These narratives query why late modern societies avoid politics, as a negotiation over the future distribution of material resources and institutional access, in favour of macabre demands for the original, the authentic. Through these narratives, Ishiguro suggests that humane politics in our contemporary world – globalised, yet fractured and haunted by historical and continuing violence – depends on privacy even, or especially, in the most banal contexts. It depends on the gap between object and image.

## Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*. London: Faber and Faber, 1986.
- <sup>ii</sup> This is a reference to drowned migrants as an embodied manifestation of geopolitical failure. On their relevance for Ishiguro's themes, see Dominic Dean, 'Ishiguro and the Abandoned Child: The Parody of International Crisis and Representation in *When We Were Orphans*.' *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 23 August 2018.
- <sup>iii</sup> Hostility to migration often also enlists the material products of globalised supply chains, notably in the rhetoric used by President Trump: See Cleve R. Wootson. 'Trump, who urged people to 'hire American,' secures 70 foreign workers for Mar-a-Lago'. *The Washington Post*. 5 November 2017. Accessed at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2017/11/05/trump-who-urged-people-to-hire-american-secures-70-foreign-workers-for-mar-a-lago/?utm\\_term=.b82e0d8e5c04](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2017/11/05/trump-who-urged-people-to-hire-american-secures-70-foreign-workers-for-mar-a-lago/?utm_term=.b82e0d8e5c04) [Accessed on 14/08/18]
- <sup>iv</sup> This terminology was established in David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*. London: Hurst and Co., 2017.
- <sup>v</sup> 'Globalisation' refers here to altered relationships between territory, ethno-national identity, and political institutions, following increased reach or integration of economic interests.
- <sup>vi</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills*. London: Faber and Faber, 1982, p.152.
- <sup>vii</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant*. London: Faber and Faber, 2015.
- <sup>viii</sup> Whereas in *Orphans* Christopher Banks tries to recover his parents, in *The Buried Giant* the parents are seeking to reach their son, both via migration.



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<sup>ix</sup> Wai-Chew Sim, *Globalisation and Dislocation in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*.

Lampeter: Edwin Mellon, 2006.

<sup>x</sup> Alexander M. Bain, 'International Settlements: Ishiguro, Shanghai, Humanitarianism.'

*NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 40, No. 3, Ishiguro's Unknown Communities  
(Summer, 2007), pp. 240-264

<sup>xi</sup> See Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'Ishiguro's Floating Worlds'. *ELH*. Vol. 68, No. 4

(Winter, 2001) pp. 1049-1076; Walkowitz, 'Unimaginable Largeness: Kazuo  
Ishiguro, Translation, and the New World Literature'. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*,  
Vol. 40, No. 3, Ishiguro's Unknown Communities (Summer, 2007) pp. 216-239.

<sup>xii</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005.

<sup>xiii</sup> See Robbins, Bruce. 'Cruelty Is Bad: Banality and Proximity in *Never Let Me Go*'.

*NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*. Vol. 40, No. 3, Ishiguro's Unknown Communities  
(Summer, 2007) pp. 289-302.

<sup>xiv</sup> See 'Kazuo Ishiguro discusses *Never Let Me Go*' [Video]. Faber and Faber, April  
2008. Accessible at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SmuYqKeTTs>> [Accessed  
09/06/18].

<sup>xv</sup> See James Hampshire, *The Politics of Immigration* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013) on how  
migration exposes contradictions in the contemporary state.

<sup>xvi</sup> Hence, in *NLMG* the clones' original artworks carry the promise of exceeding the  
exchange economy in which they are trapped and demonstrating their right to human  
life – literally, a priceless value.

<sup>xvii</sup> This observation is indebted to Darian Leader, *Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art  
Stops Us From Seeing*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002.

<sup>xviii</sup> Suggestively, Freud also sometimes treats these two kinds of image as  
exchangeable, referring to 'the loss of a loved person, or [...] the loss of some

abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal'.

Freud, S. (1917). 'Mourning and Melancholia' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*. Trans. James Strachey. pp. 237-258. London: Vintage, 2001, p.242.

<sup>xix</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*. London: Faber and Faber, 2000.

<sup>xx</sup> Ishiguro, *Pale View*, p.10.

<sup>xxi</sup> Ishiguro, *Orphans*, p.76.

<sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid*, p.75.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Freud, Sigmund. 'Beyond The Pleasure Principle' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud, Vol 18: "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", "Group Psychology" and Other Works*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Vintage, 2001.

<sup>xxiv</sup> This is a much-simplified summary of Freud's analysis.

<sup>xxv</sup> Lacan read the scene as demonstrating the child's accession from the imaginary into the symbolic order. I argue that Ishiguro repeatedly depicts adults attempting to retrieve and capture the imaginary within the symbolic. See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans: Alan Sheridan. London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1977. p. 103.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Ishiguro, *Artist*, p.31.

<sup>xxvii</sup> *Ibid*, p.30.

<sup>xxviii</sup> *Ibid*, p.34.

<sup>xxix</sup> *Ibid*, pp.43-48.

<sup>xxx</sup> See Dean, 'Ishiguro and the Abandoned Child'.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Ishiguro, *Orphans*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', pp. 237-258.

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<sup>xxxiii</sup> Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled*, p. 41.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Ishiguro, *Orphans*, pp. 182-183.

<sup>xxxv</sup> See also my discussion of this passage in Dean, 'Ishiguro and the Abandoned Child', p.5.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Ishiguro, *Orphans*, pp.185-186.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> In applying Lacanian terminology to Ishiguro, I describe the 'image' rather than 'Object A' (*objet petit a*). Although Ishiguro's images combine the intimate object of desire (like, as in *Orphans*, the mother) with an ideological concept (like the ideal Englishman), hinting at a fantasised object exceeding either, they are nevertheless formulated in explicitly visual or quasi-visual ways, as images to be revealed and perfectly embodied, a fantasy of transparency rather than obscurity.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Dean, 'Ishiguro and the Abandoned Child', pp.13-15.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*. London: Faber and Faber, 1989.

<sup>xl</sup> Ishiguro, *Remains*, p.3.

<sup>xli</sup> *Ibid*, pp.176-177.

<sup>xlii</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled*. London: Faber and Faber, 1995, p.471.

<sup>xliii</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant*. London: Faber and Faber, 2015, pp.22-23.

<sup>xliv</sup> Ishiguro, *NLMG*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Kathy's perception of her surroundings is limited by the remembered image, mirroring how her nostalgia contains her engagement with death.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Ishiguro, *Remains*, p.196.

<sup>xlvi</sup> *Ibid*, p.194.

<sup>xlviii</sup> *Ibid*, p.194.

<sup>xlix</sup> *Ibid*, p.130.

<sup>l</sup> *Ibid*, p.193.

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- <sup>li</sup> Ibid, pp.157-158.
- <sup>lii</sup> Though Stevens recognises the Jewish servants as to all appearances exemplary staff, he accepts Lord Darlington's argument that those appearances are inauthentic, the women secretly within an alien 'Jewry'. Ibid, pp.157-158.
- <sup>liii</sup> Ishiguro, *Remains*, pp. 256-258.
- <sup>liv</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall*. London: Faber and Faber, 2009.
- <sup>lv</sup> Ibid, pp.30-31.
- <sup>lvi</sup> Ibid, p. 4.
- <sup>lvii</sup> Thomas Mann, 'Death in Venice' (1912) in *Death in Venice and Other Stories*. Trans. David Luke. London: Vintage, 1998.
- <sup>lviii</sup> Richard Robinson, "'To Give a Name, Is That Still to Give?'" Footballers and Film Actors in *The Unconsoled*' in *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. London: Bloomsbury, 2010.
- <sup>lix</sup> Luchino Visconti (dir), *Morte a Venezia*. Warner Bros, 1971.
- <sup>lx</sup> Visconti extensively uses Mahler's music and changes Aschenbach's profession to reflect Mahler's; Mahler also inspires Ishiguro's Brodsky in *The Unconsoled*, according to Clare Brandabur, 'The Unconsoled: Piano Virtuoso Lost in Vienna' in *Kazuo Ishiguro in a Global Context*. Eds. Cynthia Wong and Hülya Yildiz. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015.
- <sup>lxi</sup> Ishiguro, sixteen in 1971, was passionate about film during his youth. See Vicky Thurley, 'Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro'. Published at: <http://www.theoohtray.com/2011/06/27/interview-kazuo-ishiguro/> [Accessed 09/06/18] June 2011.
- <sup>lxii</sup> Mann, *Death in Venice*, p. 267.

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- <sup>lxiii</sup> On Mann's Venice and modern consumerism, see Spurr, David, 'Venice: Impossible City' in *The Palgrave Handbook of Literature and the City*. Ed. Jeremy Tambling. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- <sup>lxiv</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. See also Spurr on abjection in Mann's novella, p.272.
- <sup>lxv</sup> Mann, *Death in Venice*, p.262-263.
- <sup>lxvi</sup> See Bosworth, *Italian Venice: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015 on Venice in contemporary consumerism, particularly Chapter 9: 'Death postponed through globalised rebirth (and mass tourism?)'.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> Ishiguro, *Nocturnes*, p.5.
- <sup>lxviii</sup> *Ibid*, p.17.
- <sup>lxix</sup> Caroline Bennett, "'Cemeteries are no places for young people': Children and trauma in the early novels of Kazuo Ishiguro' in *Kazuo Ishiguro: New Critical Visions of the Novels*. Eds. Sebastian Groes and Barry Lewis. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p.84.
- <sup>lxx</sup> Ishiguro, *Pale View*, p.173.
- <sup>lxxi</sup> *Ibid*, p.54.
- <sup>lxxii</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.
- <sup>lxxiii</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.4.
- <sup>lxxiv</sup> Ishiguro, *Pale View*, p.25.
- <sup>lxxv</sup> *Ibid*, p.165.
- <sup>lxxvi</sup> *Ibid*, pp.73-75.
- <sup>lxxvii</sup> *Ibid*, p.46.
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> This description alludes to Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

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- <sup>lxxix</sup> Ishiguro, *Pale View*, p.177.
- <sup>lxxx</sup> Ishiguro, *NLMG*, p. 5.
- <sup>lxxxi</sup> Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled*, p. 16; pp. 260-261.
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.
- <sup>lxxxiii</sup> Ishiguro, *NLMG*, p. 71.
- <sup>lxxxiv</sup> *Ibid*, p. 67.
- <sup>lxxxv</sup> Madame gives her own account of the emotions behind her gaze on Kathy on pp.266-267. However, this may not be entirely reliable; she explains herself partly by attributing knowledge to Kathy that Kathy did not have at that time. It is also a means to evade Kathy's own account of Madame's gaze, which is about reproduction and its denial – which aligns with Originality and its limits.
- <sup>lxxxvi</sup> Josh Cohen, *The Private Life: Why we Remain in the Dark*. London: Granta, 2013.
- <sup>lxxxvii</sup> Thomas Docherty, *Complicity: Criticism Between Collaboration and Commitment*. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.
- <sup>lxxxviii</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- <sup>lxxxix</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 30-31.
- <sup>xc</sup> *Ibid*, p.71.
- <sup>xci</sup> Virilio, Paul. *The Vision Machine*. Hoboken: Wiley, 1994.
- <sup>xcii</sup> *Ibid*, p.33.
- <sup>xciii</sup> This echoes the version of futurity theorised by Lee Edelman in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- <sup>xciv</sup> Ishiguro, *NLMG*, p. 258.
- <sup>xcv</sup> See Shameem Black, 'Ishiguro's Inhuman Aesthetics'. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 55, Number 4, Winter 2009, pp. 785-807.

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<sup>xcvi</sup> As Docherty observes in *Complicity* pp.125-16, the clones' treatment has parallels in contemporary violence towards migrants.

<sup>xcvii</sup> See Joe Kennedy, *Authentocrats: Culture, Politics and the New Seriousness*. London: Penguin, 2018.

<sup>xcviii</sup> Ishiguro, *NLMG*, p. 260.